This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

Claim 1 (Canceled)

Claim 2 (Currently amended):   A method as recited in claim [[1]]5 wherein the advertising ~~operation~~ comprises generating a message including the policy.

Claim 3 (Currently amended):   A method as recited in claim [[1]]5, wherein the advertising ~~operation~~ comprises incrementally distributing the policy.

Claim 4 (Currently amended):   A method as recited in claim [[1]]5, wherein the advertising ~~operation~~ comprises generating a message including the policy in response to a request for the policy.

Claim 5 (Currently amended):   <u>A method comprising:</u>
<u>advertising a policy having one or more of assertions characterizing</u> <u>communication properties of a destination node, each assertion specifying a</u> <u>communication property supported by the destination node and selectable by a</u> <u>source node to construct a communication protocol for communication with the</u> <u>destination node;</u>
~~A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising:~~

grouping two or more of the one or more assertions into a policy expression in the policy;

specifying a relationship between the two or more assertions.

Claim 6 (Currently amended):   A method comprising:

advertising a policy having one or more of assertions characterizing communication properties of a destination node, each assertion specifying a communication property supported by the destination node and selectable by a source node to construct a communication protocol for communication with the destination node;

~~A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising~~ specifying a preference for at least one of the plurality of assertions over at least one other of the plurality of assertions in the policy.

Claim 7 (Currently amended):   A method comprising:

advertising a policy having one or more of assertions characterizing communication properties of a destination node, each assertion specifying a communication property supported by the destination node and selectable by a source node to construct a communication protocol for communication with the destination node;

~~A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising:~~

grouping two or more of the plurality of assertions into a first policy expression;

specifying a first relationship between the two or more assertions in the first policy expression;

specifying a second relationship between the first policy expression and at least one other assertion not in the first policy expression.

Claim 8 (Currently amended):   A method comprising:

advertising a policy having one or more of assertions characterizing communication properties of a destination node, each assertion specifying a communication property supported by the destination node and selectable by a source node to construct a communication protocol for communication with the destination node;

A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising generating an input policy having a plurality of assertions characterizing input communication properties of the destination node and an output policy having a plurality of assertions characterizing output communication properties of the destination node.

Claim 9 (Currently amended):   A method as recited in claim [[1]]5, further comprising determining whether a received message conforms to at least one of the plurality of assertions.

Claim 10 (Canceled)

Claim 11 (Canceled)

Claim 12 (Canceled)

Claim 13 (Canceled)

Claim 14 (Canceled)

Claim 15 (Canceled)

Claim 16 ((Canceled)

Claim 17 (Withdrawn): A system comprising:

a policy having one or more assertions characterizing communication properties related to a first node; and

a policy generator generating the policy in response to a request for the policy.

Claim 18 (Withdrawn): A system as recited in claim 17, wherein the policy specifies an aggregate assertion representing a plurality of other assertions.

Claim 19 (Withdrawn): A system as recited in claim 17, wherein the policy specifies a Boolean relationship between at least two of the one or more of assertions.

Claim 20 (Withdrawn): A system as recited in claim 17, wherein the policy specifies a preference value related to a group of at least one of the one or more assertions.

Claim 21 (Withdrawn): A system as recited in claim 17, wherein the policy comprises an input policy having one or more assertions characterizing input communication properties, and an output policy having one or more assertions characterizing output communication properties.

Claim 22 (Withdrawn): A system as recited in claim 17, further comprising a policy retriever retrieving a policy having one or more assertions characterizing communication properties related to a second node.

Claim 23 (Withdrawn): A system as recited in claim 17, further comprising a message generator operable to generate a message conforming to a policy having one or more assertions characterizing communication properties related to a second node.

Claim 24 (Withdrawn): A system as recited in claim 17 wherein the policy comprises a uniform resource identifier related to one of the one or more assertions in the policy.

Claim 25 (Withdrawn): A system as recited in claim 17 wherein at least one of the one or more assertions specifies:

an integrity algorithm;

a privacy parameter;

a communication protocol;

an audit trail; or

a message routing path.

Claim 26 (Withdrawn): A computer program product encoding a computer program for executing on a computer system a computer process, the computer process comprising:

generating a policy specifying a plurality of assertions characterizing properties of a destination node;

receiving a message conforming to one or more of the plurality of assertions.

Claim 27 (Withdrawn): A computer program product as recited in claim 26, wherein the generating operation comprises generating an aggregate assertion representing the plurality of assertions.

Claim 28 (Withdrawn): A computer program product as recited in claim 26, further comprising advertising the policy at an advertising node.

Claim 29 (Withdrawn): A computer program product as recited in claim 26, further comprising distributing the policy in response to a request for the policy.

Claim 30 (Withdrawn): A computer program product as recited in claim 26, wherein the generating operation comprises:

creating a group of two or more of the plurality of assertions;

specifying a relationship between two or more assertions in the group.

Claim 31 (Withdrawn): A computer program product as recited in claim 26, wherein the generating operation comprises specifying a preference for at least one of the plurality of assertions over at least one other of the plurality of assertions.

Claim 32 (Withdrawn): A computer program product as recited in claim 26, wherein the generating operation comprises:

creating a group of two or more of the plurality of assertions;

specifying a first relationship between the two or more assertions in the group;

specifying a second relationship between the group of assertions and at least one other assertion not in the group of assertions.

Claim 33 (Withdrawn): A computer program product as recited in recited in claim 26 wherein the generating operation comprises generating an input policy having one or more assertions characterizing input communication properties, and an output policy having one or more assertions characterizing output communication properties.

Claim 34 (Withdrawn): A computer program product as recited in claim 26 wherein the generating operation comprises generating a mark-up language document.

Claim 35 (Withdrawn): A computer program product as recited in claim 26, further comprising determining whether the message conforms to at least one of the plurality of assertions.

Claim 36 (New): A method as recited in claim 6 wherein the advertising comprises generating a message including the policy.

Claim 37 (New): A method as recited in claim 6, wherein the advertising comprises incrementally distributing the policy.

Claim 38 (New): A method as recited in claim 6, wherein the advertising comprises generating a message including the policy in response to a request for the policy.

Claim 39 (New): A method as recited in claim 6, further comprising determining whether a received message conforms to at least one of the plurality of assertions.

Claim 40 (New): A method as recited in claim 7, wherein the advertising comprises generating a message including the policy.

Claim 41 (New): A method as recited in claim 7, wherein the advertising comprises incrementally distributing the policy.

Claim 42 (New):   A method as recited in claim 7, wherein the advertising comprises generating a message including the policy in response to a request for the policy.

Claim 43 (New):   A method as recited in claim 7, further comprising determining whether a received message conforms to at least one of the plurality of assertions.

Claim 44 (New):   A method as recited in claim 8, wherein the advertising comprises generating a message including the policy.

Claim 45 (New):   A method as recited in claim 8, wherein the advertising comprises incrementally distributing the policy.

Claim 46 (New):   A method as recited in claim 8, wherein the advertising comprises generating a message including the policy in response to a request for the policy.

Claim 47 (New):   A method as recited in claim 8, further comprising determining whether a received message conforms to at least one of the plurality of assertions.